

## **A NEW BEGINNING: THE U.S. AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD**

On June 4, 2009, President Obama delivered his promised address to Muslim communities around the world. He announced a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world based on mutual interest and mutual respect, including new partnerships in areas of such as education, economic development, science and technology, and global health. The President also emphasized the importance of turning interfaith dialogue into interfaith partnerships that bring members of different faiths together for community service – whether it is to combat malaria, rebuild communities, or provide disaster relief.

### **Education**

The U.S. is committed to helping children throughout the world have access to a quality education and to opportunities for higher education. As the U.S. develops an international education strategy, students from the North Africa, broader Middle East, and Southeast Asia will be one of its priorities. The President identified several specific initiatives:

- Exchange Programs. Whether they involve high-school, undergraduate, or graduate students, exchange programs play a vital role in fostering intercultural understanding and developing the human capital that fuels growth and progress. As a result, the U.S. will expand opportunities for students from the region to visit and study in the U.S. as well as find ways of encouraging young Americans to study abroad in the Muslim-majority countries.
- Scholarships. The U.S. will help expand scholarships to help children afford educational institutions in the region and in the U.S..
- E-Learning. The U.S. will partner with educational institutions to create virtual universities that facilitate distance learning on a wide range of topics while providing resources teachers can use to design their own courses. These sites will make world-class education and educational resources available to hundreds of thousands of young people and teachers.

### **Economic Development**

The United States is committed to working with Muslim communities to foster economic growth, investment, and build a sustainable economic future based. In addition to partnering with other governments and multilateral organizations, promoting entrepreneurship will require new public-private partnerships. Some efforts the U.S. will develop in the coming months include:

- Business Volunteer Corps. The U.S. has some the world's best business schools and most talented CEOs, prize-winning economists and renowned consulting companies. By establishing a volunteer corps of business leaders, students, economists, consultants, and experts that are interested in providing advice and mentorship, the U.S. can make this business acumen available to the rising entrepreneurs in the the region.

- Summit on Entrepreneurship. The President will host an international summit on entrepreneurship that brings together business leaders, philanthropists, and social entrepreneurs from the U.S. and Muslim communities around the world. The goal will be to connect these people with one another, highlight existing efforts, identify new opportunities, and help those with good ideas gain the tools to bring them to fruition.

### **Science and Technology**

The U.S. is recognized as a worldwide leader in science and technology, and expanding progress in these areas is an interest shared by communities across the Muslim world. As a result, the U.S. will significantly expand S&T partnerships with communities throughout the region on a wide range of issues, including basic science, sustainable development, water management, information technology, and climate change. Some specific initiatives that the U.S. will pursue include:

- Science and Technology Fund. The United States will establish a regional science fund for S&T collaboration, capacity development, and supporting innovation with commercial potential. In addition to the S&T Fund, science and technology will be an important cross-cutting emphasis of U.S. international assistance programs.
- Science Envoys. In order to demonstrate our commitment to partnering with Muslim communities on S&T, the United States will establish a new Science Envoys program that will send respected American scientists to foster collaboration on science and technology with other countries and communities.
- Centers of Scientific Excellence. The U.S. will work with educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and foreign governments to establish centers of excellence in science and technology in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia.

### **Global Health**

Public health challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are best addressed in an integrated way and in partnership with others. President Obama's new comprehensive approach to global health will begin to focus attention on broad global health changes such as child and maternal health, family planning, and neglected tropical diseases, with continued support for robust HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria programs throughout the world, including Muslim-majority communities. In addition, the President announced a commitment to working with partners to eradicate polio – a disease that disproportionately affects Muslim communities.

- Polio Eradication. The U.S. remains a leader in the fight against polio, but the task of eradication is not yet complete and is still endemic in Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and in predominantly Muslim communities in India. The U.S. is committed to working with a range of partners and the President announced a new partnership with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to finish the job on polio eradication.